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Sustainable Chesapeake
Kristen Hughes Evans
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New Video Highlights the Role of Cover Crops in Managing Drought and Increasing Farm Profitability

Central Virginia — As Virginia farmers face growing challenges from unpredictable weather patterns and increased drought conditions, Sustainable Chesapeake is proud to release a new video titled, "*Cover Crops, Drought, and Profit.*" This video features local farmers and agricultural experts discussing the critical role of cover crops in improving soil health, conserving water, and boosting farm profitability.

The video emphasizes the real-world impacts of cover crops on Virginia farm yields and profit. **Tim Woodward**, an agronomist with Virginia Seed Company, highlights the importance of maximizing the water farmers receive: "The Good Lord controls the rain we get. But it's up to us what we do with it." Woodward points out that cover crops help farmers better manage rainfall, leading to increased yields and profitability.

Several Virginia farmers share their experiences implementing cover crops to manage drought stress. **Grayson Kirby** of Creamfield Farm in Studley, Virginia, discusses how his farm, which uses cover crops across 100% of its acres, saw improvements in water retention during dry conditions. "The past few years, we've been focusing on some vetch cover, which has been holding moisture in, especially in a year like this one, when margins are going to be tight because of the dry weather and heat."

The video also features **Jamie Shenk**, manager of Beauregard Farms in Brandy Station, Virginia. "2024 is going to be a challenging year for agriculture here in Virginia. We're looking at ways of breaking even and trying to eke out a profit and reduce losses." Shenk highlights how cover crops like rye and vetch help retain moisture and improve nitrogen availability for his corn crop, particularly during heat stress. "I cannot control things like heat stress that we've gone through, but I have improved this crop's potential by the cover crops that we planted beforehand."

Tom Nixon of Glenmary Farm in Rapidan, Virginia, has been trying different cover crop strategies for 25-30 years to see what works best for his farm. They are seeing a dramatic difference in corn yields between fields where cover crops are planted and a nearby field that had to be tilled.

As Virginia agriculture faces a challenging 2024 season with tightening margins and difficult growing conditions, the video underscores the importance of innovation and adaptive farming

practices. Cover crops are proving to be a key solution for farmers looking to weather these challenges and improve their bottom lines.

Sustainable Chesapeake remains committed to supporting farmers through conservation practices that promote resilience and sustainability. To watch the full video and learn more about the benefits of cover crops, visit <https://youtu.be/hnn-i5kx5fk>

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact:

Kristen Hughes Evans

804-554-3403

kristen@susches.org

www.susches.org